

CLAIMS

1. An optical node for dropping wavelengths from a multi-wavelength optical signal in
5 an optical communications network, wherein said network comprises a plurality of
nodes connected by an optical transmission medium carrying a plurality of wavelengths
divided into discrete bands, wherein each band constitutes a group of contiguous
wavelengths, said node comprising:
- 10 an optical drop unit containing a fixed drop filter, wherein said filter drops a fixed
set of wavelengths at the node, wherein the fixed set includes wavelengths from
different bands, while forwarding wavelengths that do not comprise the fixed set
through the node.
- 15 2. The optical node according to claim 1, wherein the fixed set of wavelengths is
predetermined prior to installation of the filter in the network.
3. The optical node of claim 2, wherein the fixed set of wavelengths is independent of a
level of traffic at the node.
- 20 4. The optical node of claim 2, wherein the fixed set initially includes wavelengths that
do not carry information, in order to reserve the wavelengths that do not carry
information for future growth of the network.
- 25 5. The optical node of claim 4, wherein the node includes:
- a plurality of thin-film filters for removing the fixed set of wavelengths from the
network; and
- a receiver for converting the fixed set of wavelengths to electrical signals.
- 30 6. The node of claim 1, wherein the fixed set comprises one wavelength from each band
in the network.

7. The node of claim 1, wherein the fixed set comprises two wavelengths from a first band, and two wavelengths from a second band.

5 8. The node of claim 1, wherein the fixed set comprises a first wavelength from a first band, and a plurality of wavelengths from a second band.

9. The node of claim 1, wherein the fixed set comprises multiple wavelengths from a plurality of bands.

10

10. A fixed filter for an optical node in an optical communications network, said network comprising a transmission medium carrying wavelengths divided into discrete bands, wherein each band is defined by a group of contiguous wavelengths, said filter comprising:

15

a plurality of optical filters arranged in series on a single optical drop card, wherein each thin-film filter is designed to drop a predetermined wavelength from a multi-wavelength optical signal and forward all wavelengths other than said predetermined wavelength.

20

11. The fixed filter of claim 10, wherein the plurality of optical filters comprises a plurality of optical thin-film filters.

12. The fixed filter according to claim 10, wherein a first optical filter drops a first
25 wavelength from a first band and a second optical filter drops a second wavelength from a second band.

13. The fixed filter according to claim 10, wherein a first optical filter drops a first
wavelength from a first band, a second optical filter drops a second wavelength from
30 said first band, a third optical filter drops a third wavelength from a second band, and a fourth optical filter drops a fourth wavelength from said second band.

14. The fixed filter according to claim 10, wherein the fixed drop filter drops a fixed set of wavelengths from a plurality of bands in the multi-wavelength optical signal.

- 5 15. A method of dropping wavelengths from a multi-wavelength optical signal in an optical communications network, said network comprising a plurality of nodes connected by an optical transmission medium carrying a plurality of wavelengths divided into discrete bands, wherein each band constitutes a group of contiguous wavelengths, said method comprising:

10

determining a fixed set of wavelengths to be dropped at an intermediate node in the network, wherein the fixed set includes wavelengths from a plurality bands in the multi-wavelength optical signal;

15

deploying a filter to drop the fixed set; and

forwarding wavelengths in the optical signal that do not comprise the fixed set.

20

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the step of determining the fixed set includes partitioning each band into a first subset of wavelengths to be dropped at a particular node and a second subset of wavelengths to pass through the node unaffected.

25

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the step of determining the fixed set further includes selecting individual filter components that correspond to each wavelength in the fixed set.

30

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting one wavelength from each band in the multi-wavelength optical signal to be included in the first subset.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting two wavelengths from a first band and two wavelengths from a second band to be included in the first subset.

5 20. The method of claim 16, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting one wavelength from a first band, and a plurality of wavelengths from a second band to be included in the first subset.

21. The method of claim 16, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting multiple
10 wavelengths from a plurality of bands to be included in the first subset.

22. An optical node for adding wavelengths to a multi-wavelength optical signal in an optical communications network, wherein said network comprises a plurality of nodes connected by an optical transmission medium carrying a plurality of wavelengths
15 divided into discrete bands, wherein each band constitutes a group of contiguous wavelengths, said node comprising:

an optical add unit containing a fixed filter, wherein said filter adds a fixed set of wavelengths to the multi-wavelength optical signal at the node, wherein the fixed set
20 includes wavelengths from different bands.

23. The optical node according to claim 22, wherein the fixed set of wavelengths is predetermined prior to installation of the filter in the network.

25 24. The optical node of claim 23, wherein the fixed set of wavelengths is independent of a level of traffic at the node.

25. The optical node of claim 23, wherein the fixed set initially includes wavelengths that do not carry information, in order to reserve the wavelengths that do not carry
30 information for future growth of the network.

26. The node of claim 22, wherein the fixed set comprises one wavelength from each band in the network.

27. The node of claim 22, wherein the fixed set comprises two wavelengths from a first
5 band, and two wavelengths from a second band.

28. The node of claim 22, wherein the fixed set comprises a first wavelength from a first band, and a plurality of wavelengths from a second band.

10 29. The node of claim 22, wherein the fixed set comprises multiple wavelengths from a plurality of bands.

30. An optical add/drop node for adding and dropping wavelengths from a multi-wavelength optical signal in an optical communications network, wherein said network
15 comprises a plurality of nodes connected by an optical transmission medium carrying a plurality of wavelengths divided into discrete bands, wherein each band constitutes a group of contiguous wavelengths, said node comprising:

an optical add/drop unit containing a fixed add/drop filter, wherein said filter drops
20 and adds a fixed set of wavelengths at the node, wherein the fixed set includes wavelengths from different bands, while forwarding wavelengths that do not comprise the fixed set through the node.

31. The optical node according to claim 30, wherein the fixed set of wavelengths is
25 predetermined prior to installation of the filter in the network.

32. The optical node of claim 31, wherein the fixed set of wavelengths is independent of a level of traffic at the node.

33. The optical node of claim 31, wherein the fixed set initially includes wavelengths that do not carry information, in order to reserve the wavelengths that do not carry information for future growth of the network.

5 34. The optical node of claim 33, wherein the node includes:

a plurality of thin-film filters for removing the fixed set of wavelengths from the network; and

a receiver for converting the fixed set of wavelengths to electrical signals.

10

35. The node of claim 30, wherein the fixed set comprises one wavelength from each band in the network.

36. The node of claim 30, wherein the fixed set comprises two wavelengths from a first
15 band, and two wavelengths from a second band.

37. The node of claim 30, wherein the fixed set comprises a first wavelength from a first band, and a plurality of wavelengths from a second band.

20 38. The node of claim 30, wherein the fixed set comprises multiple wavelengths from a plurality of bands.

39. A method of adding wavelengths to a multi-wavelength optical signal in an optical communications network, said network comprising a plurality of nodes connected by an
25 optical transmission medium carrying a plurality of wavelengths divided into discrete bands, wherein each band constitutes a group of contiguous wavelengths, said method comprising:

30 determining a fixed set of wavelengths to be added at an intermediate node in the network, wherein the fixed set includes wavelengths from a plurality bands in the multi-wavelength optical signal; and

deploying a filter to add the fixed set to the multi-wavelength optical signal.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein the step of determining the fixed set includes
5 partitioning each band into a first subset of wavelengths to be added at a particular node
and a second subset of wavelengths that is not added to the multi-wavelength optical
signal at the node.

41. The method of claim 40, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting one
10 wavelength from each band in the multi-wavelength optical signal to be included in the
first subset.

42. The method of claim 40, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting two
wavelengths from a first band and two wavelengths from a second band to be included
15 in the first subset.

43. The method of claim 40, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting one
wavelength from a first band, and a plurality of wavelengths from a second band to be
included in the first subset.

20 44. The method of claim 40, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting multiple
wavelengths from a plurality of bands to be included in the first subset.

45. A method of adding and dropping wavelengths from a multi-wavelength optical
25 signal in an optical communications network, said network comprising a plurality of
nodes connected by an optical transmission medium carrying a plurality of wavelengths
divided into discrete bands, wherein each band constitutes a group of contiguous
wavelengths, said method comprising:

determining a fixed set of wavelengths to be added and dropped at an intermediate node in the network, wherein the fixed set includes wavelengths from a plurality bands in the multi-wavelength optical signal;

5 deploying a filter to add and drop the fixed set; and

forwarding wavelengths in the optical signal that do not comprise the fixed set.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein the step of determining the fixed set includes
10 partitioning each band into a first subset of wavelengths to be added/dropped at a particular node and a second subset of wavelengths to pass through the node unaffected.

47. The method of claim 46, wherein the step of determining the fixed set further
15 includes selecting individual filter components that correspond to each wavelength in the fixed set.

48. The method of claim 46, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting one
20 wavelength from each band in the multi-wavelength optical signal to be included in the first subset.

49. The method of claim 46, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting two
wavelengths from a first band and two wavelengths from a second band to be included
in the first subset.

25 50. The method of claim 46, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting one wavelength from a first band, and a plurality of wavelengths from a second band to be included in the first subset.

51. The method of claim 46, wherein the step of partitioning includes selecting multiple
30 wavelengths from a plurality of bands to be included in the first subset.